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Message Text

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64
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OC-05 CCO-00 MMO-01 PER-01 /020 W
---------- 044973
R 062133Z NOV 75
FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7994

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: AFSP, ACOM, ASEC

FOR MS. JOAN CLARK, EUR/EX, FROM THE AMBASSADOR

1. CANADIAN POSTAL SYSTEM HAS FOUR SEPARATE EMPLOYEE UNIONS. AS A RESULT, SINCE 1968 WHEN A GENERAL POSTAL STRIKE OCCURRED, THERE HAVE BEEN FREQUENT WORK STOPPAGES OR SLOWDOWNS BY ONE OR ANOTHER OF THE UNIONS IN ONE OR MORE OF THE MAJOR CITIES ACROSS CANADA. MONTREAL, TORONTO, AND VANCOUVER TEND TO BE THE CITIES MOST FREQEUENTLY EXPERIENCING POSTAL DISORDERS BUT NONE ARE, OR HAVE BEEN, IMMUNE TO DISRUPTION OF POSTAL SERVICE.

2. CURRENT POSTAL STRIKE IN CANADA, NOW IN ITS 16TH DAY, HIGHLIGHTS AN UNSATISFACTORY SITUATION THAT HAS LONG BEEN A PROBLEM: ABSENCE OF COMMUNICATORS ABLE TO SEND AND RECEIVE CLASSIFIED TELEGRAPHIC TRAFFIC, PARTICULARLY AT OUR POSTS IN VANCOUVER AND QUEBEC. SITUATION AT QUEBEC FURTHER COMPLICATED BY FACT THAT POST HAS BEEN WITHOUT CLASSIFIED TYPING CAPABILITY SINCE EARLY 1972.

3. BOTH VANCOUVER AND QUEBEC HAVE RELIED HEAVILY FOR CLASSIFIED MESSAGE TRAFFIC ON THE CANADIAN POSTAL SYSTEM. EVEN WHEN CANADIAN POSTAL WORKERS ARE NOT OUT ON STRIKE, THIS HAS INEVITABLY RESULTED IN DELAYS OF VARYING LENGTHS, AS WELL AS BEING OF QUESTIONABLE SECURITY (THEREBEING NO REGULARLY SCHEDULED COURIER POUCH SERVICE BETWEEN CANADIAN POSTS). FOR THE PAST TWO AND ONE-HALF WEEKS DURING WHICH THE POSTAL
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STRIKE HAS BEEN IN EFFECT, EVEN THESE COMMUNICATIONS HAVE

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GROUND TO A VIRTUAL HALT.

4. VANCOUVER DEALS WITH A WIDE VARIETY OF MATTERS ABOVE
AND BEYOND THOSE WHICH ARE STANDARD FOR A CONSULAR POST:
ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS (E.G. FLATHEAD RIVER POLLUTION, SKAGIT RIVER
FLOODING); NATIONAL SECURITY (OPPOSITION TO TRIDENT BASE AT BANGOR,
WASH.); POLITICO-ECONOMIC (INDIAN LAND CLAIMS VS. PIPELINE
DEVELOPMENT, NATURAL GAS SUPPLIES TO U.S. WEST COAST).
IT NOW FACES A PROVINCIAL ELECTION IN DECEMBER WHICH
WILL HAVE NATIONAL REPERCUSSIONS. QUEBEC EXISTS AS A
FOREIGN SERVICE POST LARGELY TO SERVE AS A POLITICAL
LISTENING POST IN A PROVINCE WHERE SEPARATIST TENDENCIES
ARE STRONG AND WHERE A PARTY DEDICATED TO SEPARATING
QUEBEC PROVINCE FROM CANADA COULD WELL ACHIEVE POWER IN
THE FAIRLY NEAR FUTURE. IN NEITHER OF THESE POSTS DO
WE HAVE THE CAPABILITY FOR CLASSIFIED TELEGRAPHIC COMMUNICA-
TION. (I CONSIDER MANUAL MACHINE OPERATION AS TOTALLY
INADEQUATE, EVEN LESS SATISFACTORY THAN THE OLD ONE-TIME-
PAD.)

5. IN QUEBEC, WITH ONLY A LOCAL EMPLOYEE TYPIST, THE
POLITICAL ASSESSMENTS AND JUDGEMENTS WHICH REPRESENT THE
REAL VALUE OF HAVING QUALIFIED POLITICAL OBSERVERS STATIONED
THERE HAVE TO BE HEDGED OR OMITTED TO KEEP THE COPY DOWN
TO LOU CLASSIFICATION, WITH THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE BEING A
U.S. OFFICER TYPING THE DOCUMENT.

6. I DO NOT WISH TO EXAGGERATE THE IMPORTANCE OF THESE
TWO POSTS, BUT I WOULD VENTURE TO OBSERVE THAT WHAT THEY
HAVE TO SAY IS LIKELY TO BE OF CONSIDERABLY GREATER INTEREST
AND OF MUCH MORE DIRECT IMPACT ON AMERICAN INTERESTS THAN
THE BULK OF WHAT IS AVAILABLE FOR REPORTING FROM A FAIR
NUMBER OF POSTS AROUND THE WORLD WHICH ARE PRESENTLY EQUIPPED AND
STAFFED FOR RAPID CLASSIFIED TELEGRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS.

7. AS YOU WILL RECALL, THIS SUBJECT AND THE MANY PROBLEMS
ASSOCIATED WITH IT WERE DISCUSSED IN DETAIL BY THE RESPECTIVE
CONSULS GENERAL, EMBASSY OFFICERS AND WASHINGTON PARTICIPANTS
AT THE RECENT PRINCIPAL'S OFFICERS' CONFERENCE HERE OCT. 20-21.

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IM WITH THE FOREGOING IN MIND, I URGE THAT EARLY AND
FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO ESTABLISHEMENT OF
APPROPRIATE FACILITIES AND THE ASSIGNMENT OF A FULL-TIME
COMMUNICATOR TO VANCOUVER AND THE ASSIGNMENT TO QUEBEC
OF EITHER A COMMUNICATOR WHO CAN ALSO HANDLE TYPING
CHORES OR AN AMERICAN SECRETARY SKILLED IN COMMUNICATIONS
WORK.
PORTER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 NOV 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MorefiRH
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975OTTAWA04182
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750388-0302
From: OTTAWA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751168/aaaacitb.tel
Line Count: 115
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MorefiRH
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 MAY 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <07 MAY 2003 by MorefiRH>
Review Markings:

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US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: n/a
TAGS: AFSP, ACOM, ASEC
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006